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ABSTRACT

Students who were academically dismissed at the end of the spring 1994 semester (at the University of Maryland, College Park) received an invitation to participate in a summer program designed to teach some of the skills necessary for academic success. Fourteen sessions were offered over a four-week period during the first summer school session. The treatment group was comprised of 133 participants, 98 of whom were subsequently approved for reinstatement for fall 1994. The comparison group was comprised of 533 individuals who did not participate in the summer program yet were approved for reinstatement for fall 1994. Academic persistence rates were significantly higher for the treatment group than for the comparison group for three of the four semesters subsequent to the summer program. Two years after dismissal, 64% of the treatment group and only 49% of the comparison group were enrolled at the university. The relative success of the intervention along with the low proportion of dismissed students participating in the program (16%) suggests a need for early and intensified efforts to attract dismissed students to the summer retention program. (Author/LSR)

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Research Report 13-96

Vivian Boyd, Fran Friesen, Patricia Hunt, Stanley Hunt, Thomas Magoon, John Van Brunt

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Stanley Hunt, Thomas Magoon, John Van Brunt

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A Summer Retention Program for Students Who Were Academically Dismissed and Applied for Reinstatement

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Students who were academically dismissed at the end of the spring 1994 semester received an invitation to participate in a summer program designed to teach some of the skills necessary for academic success. Fourteen sessions were offered over a four week period during the first summer school session.

One hundred thirty-three individuals participated in the summer program, 98 of whom subsequently were approved for reinstatement for fall 1994. These individuals comprised the treatment group. Five hundred thirty-three individuals not participating in the summer program yet approved for reinstatement for fall 1994 comprised the comparison group.

Academic persistence rates were significantly higher for the treatment group than for the comparison group for three of the four semesters subsequent to the summer program. Two years after dismissal, 64% of the treatment group, and only 49% of the comparison group were enrolled at the University.

The relative success of the intervention along with the low proportion of dismissed stuents participating in the program (16%) suggests a need for early and intensified efforts to attract dismissed students to the summer retention program.

A Summer Retention Program for Students Who Were Academically Dismissed and Applied for Reinstatement

Research Report 13-96

Counseling Center Retention Study Group*

Students who have been academically dismissed from the University of Maryland at College Park (UMCP) and who apply for reinstatement, typically enroll in UMCP's summer school program in order to improve their grade point average. A pilot study was implemented during the summer of 1992, in which dismissed transfer students were offered the opportunity to take a workshop series designed to help them deal more successfully with their academic life, both during summer school and if they are reinstated. An evaluation of the impact of the 1992 intervention on retention rates showed that for four semesters subsequent to the intervention both the academic persistence rates and the rates of persistence in good academic standing were consistently higher for the treatment group than for the non-treatment comparison group. The differences, however, were not statistically significant.

A replication of that study was implemented during the summer of 1993, with modifications to enhance the program's impact and significantly raise the retention rates of its participants.

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Overall data from that study indicate that for three of the four semesters subsequent to the intervention the program produced statistically significant differences in retention, between the dismissed transfer students seeking reinstatement who participated in the program and those who did not participate. These findings suggested that further replication should involve intensified efforts to attract dismissed students to this summer program.

The present study is a replication of the two previous summer retention programs, modified both to enhance the impact of the intervention on its participants and to include all students, not just transfer students, who were academically dismissed at the end of spring 1994.

METHOD

A summer retention program, designed to teach some of the skills necessary for academic success, was offered to all students who were academically dismissed at the end of the spring 1994 semester (N=810). A 14-session program was offered to dismissed students with two options: (a) as a non-credit free workshop series or (b) as a one-credit, academic course with a letter grade that would become part of the student's official University cumulative grade point average. The one-hour sessions took place over a four week period during the first summer session of 1994.

There were seven components of the Summer Retention Program, co-taught by staff from the Counseling Center's Learning Assistance Service and from its Counseling Service:

* time management and goal setting
* listening and note-taking
* textbook mastery
* working with the University system
* career exploration
* networking and assertiveness
* overcoming resistance to academic success

During the first session, support groups were formed and thenceforth met for a period of time during each of the subsequent sessions.

The 810 students who were academically dismissed at the end of the spring 1994 semester received an informational letter from the Office of Reenrollment in which the reinstatement process was described. Included in that letter was a flyer describing the Summer Retention Program. Students interested in participating in the program with the credit option were encouraged to see their academic advisors in order to receive credit for the program. Students wishing the non-credit option were encouraged to call the Counseling Center immediately to reserve space in the program.

The letter suggested that to increase students' chances of being reinstated, students should participate in the Summer Retention Program and immediately see their advisors about the impact of repeating courses with poor grades.

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Outcome measures

Two outcome measures were examined for the four semesters following the summer of intervention to determine the program's effectiveness on the subsequent enrollment of participants who were reinstated for the fall 1994 semester:

1. Academic persistence, defined as graduated or enrolled throughout a given semester;

2. Academic persistence in good standing, defined as graduated or enrolled throughout a given semester without any academic action taken against them.

RESULTS

One hundred thirty-three dismissed students participated in the 1994 summer retention program. Of those, 39% were white, 67% were male. Seventy-nine selected the non-credit option, 36 chose the credit option, and 18 chose to do the work as independent study. Of the 677 dismissed students who received the flyer but did not attend the Summer Retention Program, 52% were white, 58% were male.

It is important to note that not all those who attended the program were reinstated at UMCP for the fall '94 semester, nor did all who were reinstated attend UMCP. It is sometimes the recommendation of the Petition Board that a student "take a semester off" after having been academically dismissed before returning to continue his/her academic program. See Table 1.

Table 1.
Petition Board Decisions for Fall 1994 by Group

	GROUP			
	Participants		Non-participants	
Initial N	133		677	
	n	%	n	%
Approved for F94	98	74	533	79
Denied	35	26	144	21

Individuals participating in the Summer Retention Program who were approved for reinstatement at the University for the Fall 1994 semester (N=98) comprised the Treatment Group. Individuals not participating in the program who were approved for Fall 1994 reinstatement (N=533) comprised the Comparison Group.

Table 2 shows academic persistence rates for the Treatment and Comparison groups.

Table 2.

Academic Persistence Rates by Group

	GROUP				
	Treatment		Comparison		
Initial n	98		533		
Semester	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**p**
Fall '94	84	86	432	81	n.s.
Spring '95	73	74	320	60	.007
Fall '95	64	65	289	54	.04
Spring '96	63	64	259	49	.004

Table 3 shows rates of academic persistence in good standing for the treatment and comparison groups.

Table 3.

Academic Persistence in Good Standing by Group

	GROUP				
	Treatment		Comparison		
Initial n	98		533		
Semester	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**p**
Fall '94	33	34	133	25	n.s.
Spring '95	39	40	173	32	n.s.
Fall '95	43	44	185	35	n.s.
Spring '96	45	46	202	38	n.s.

DISCUSSION

The 1994 Summer Retention Program marks the first time this intervention was open to all dismissed students seeking reinstatement at the University. Previous programs had been designed for transfer students only. Consequently, the number of students participating in the program was higher than in previous summers. Nevertheless, only 16% of dismissed students took advantage of the program.

Academic persistence rates were significantly higher for the Treatment Group than for the Comparison Group for three of the four semesters analyzed, using the chi square statistic. By the end of the fourth semester, 64% of the Treatment Group were still enrolled at the University, while this was true for only 49% of the Comparison Group.

The rates of persistence in good academic standing for each group increased over the four semesters studied. However, the proportion of students in the Treatment Group who ended their

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semester in good academic standing was consistently, though not significantly, higher than that of the Comparison Group.

These results indicate that the Summer Retention Program has a significant impact on students' ability to persist at the University after having been dismissed. While it is encouraging that 46% of the Treatment Group ended the fourth semester after dismissal in good academic standing, the low rates of persistence in good academic standing for both groups suggest a high level of academic vulnerability among students who have been academically dismissed and then reinstated.

Given the relative success of the Summer Retention Program and the low proportion of dismissed students who participated in it (16%) there is clearly a need for early and intensified efforts to attract dismissed students to the program. Further studies might explore issues related to a sense of defeat which may be involved in students' unwillingness to seek academic assistance.

References

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